



**Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies
American Water Works Association
Association of California Water Agencies
National Association of Water Companies
Western Coalition of Arid States**

April 28, 2004

The Honorable James Inhofe, Chair
Senate Environment and Public Works Comte.
364 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jim Jeffords, Ranking Member
Senate Environment and Public Works Comte.
364 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Joe Barton, Chair
House Energy and Commerce Committee
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Dingell, Ranking Member
House Energy and Commerce Committee
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Retain committee jurisdiction over DOD's RRPI

Dear Committee Chairs and Ranking Members,

This year, the Department of Defense has again proposed to incorporate its Readiness and Range Preservation Initiative (RRPI) into the DOD's fiscal 2005 authorization bill. Our organizations, representing thousands of public and private water utilities nationwide and the millions of customers they serve, urge you to exercise your committees' full jurisdiction over the potential environmental and public health impacts of this proposal.

AMWA, AWWA, ACWA, NAWC and WESTCAS believe that the RRPI would inhibit the ability of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, its state partners or water systems to prevent defense-related contamination and the loss of drinking water sources. We are concerned that the proposed changes to the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act and the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act could endanger the health of Americans, including soldiers and their families living on or near military facilities.

By redefining the terms "solid waste" and "release," the human health and environmental impacts from DOD activities would only be addressed when contaminants have migrated off of an operational range. Acting only after the damage has been done could result in unnecessary public health risks, unacceptable losses of water sources, and high costs to clean up water supplies and/or secure alternative sources.

Military readiness need not be achieved at the expense of established protections for public health and water resources. We cannot support the diminution of our authority to contain and remove hazardous waste, particularly when there is little or no evidence that these laws are impairing military readiness. Thirty-nine state attorneys general have expressed this same position.

On April 21, we told a joint Energy and Commerce subcommittee hearing that the RRPI's exemptions should be more narrowly defined to apply to specific essential facilities, and be periodically reviewed by the Congress. We also suggest that the Department be directed by a date certain to identify and monitor contamination at affected facilities and report results to the EPA and the public. This is necessary in order to detect contamination before it has migrated into a source of water used for domestic, municipal, or agricultural purposes. The location and extent of that migration should also be identified and appropriately reported.

Finally, a new national strategy should be developed to fund the assessment and remediation of perchlorate contamination wherever it exists in public water supplies. This should include requiring the DOD, as part of next year's budget submittal, to provide a plan for monitoring and cleanup within their facilities.

We are hopeful that the DOD proposal can be re-crafted to be successful for the department's needs and still be protective to public health. In the meantime, please act to retain your committees' full jurisdiction over the environmental changes sought in the RRPI and the 2005 defense authorization bill. We look forward to working with you on this important issue.

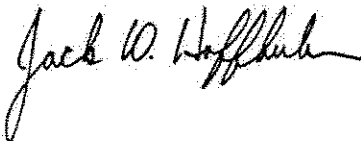
Sincerely,



Dianne VanDe Hei, Executive Director
Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies



Peter Cook, Executive Director
National Association of Water Companies



Jack Hoffbuhr, Executive Director
American Water Works Association



Larry Libeu, President
Western Coalition of Arid States



Stephen K. Hall, Executive Director
Association of California Water Agencies

cc. Senate Armed Services Committee
House Armed Services Committee